

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) voted Friday for the passage of H.R. 3082, the Military Construction and Veterans Bill that provides nearly \$109 billion for veterans' needs nationwide, including medical care, mental health, rural healthcare and assistance to homeless veterans. The bill, which awaits Senate approval, includes nearly \$237 million for projects in the San Antonio area.

"Too many projects have been unfunded or underfunded for too long when it comes to the military," Congressman Rodriguez said. "Now, we can provide things like greater access to healthcare, community-based readjustment counseling and prosthetic research to address the needs of our men and women in uniform."

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Congressman Rodriguez had a lead role in pushing the bill through.

"It was a pleasure working together with Congressman Rodriguez on the House Appropriations Committee toward the passage of this bill, which provides funding for so many needed projects that shore up the missions and welfare of our military," said Congressman Chet Edwards, Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee. "Congressman Rodriguez's strong leadership on the committee in pushing this bill through helps ensure that the men and women who have served our nation proudly will get the medical care, technical assistance and support they deserve."

The bill includes \$7.9 million in funding for Kelly Annex Field to improve and upgrade an Aircraft Maintenance Building that will provide a place where F-16 fighter jets can be properly maintained. The building, while structurally sound, must be brought up to code. These funds will ensure the secure and environmentally sound storage and operation of aircraft parts and equipment. The jets will be used to bolster the mission of the 149th Fighter Wing, a National Guard unit that provides recurring and requalification training to both guard and active duty pilots. They provide a vital role in ensuring fighter pilots are prepared for their missions in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as around the world.

"Kelly has been an important part of San Antonio's military history and I'm glad that this funding has cleared the full House," said Congressman Rodriguez. I appreciate the leadership

of Chairman Edwards in ensuring passage of this bill that enjoyed overwhelming bipartisan support for the needs of the Armed Services and military veterans.”

Lackland Air Force Base received \$72 million for construction of a Phase 1 ambulatory care center, \$1.5 million for a C-5 ground training schoolhouse addition project, \$77 million for a dormitory for recruits, \$32 million for a classroom/dining facility, and \$4.8 million for Evasion, Conduct After Capture Training.

Other San Antonio projects include \$20 million for an Army Reserve Center and \$2.1 million for a Navy Reserve Training Center and \$20 million for construction projects at Fort Sam Houston.

KEY POINTS OF H.R. 3082

Department of Veterans Affairs: Provides nearly \$109 billion for veteran’s medical care, claims processors, and facility improvements. To provide quality health care for the nation’s 5 million veterans, this bill provides \$53 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs for FY 2010 - \$5.4 billion more than fiscal year 2009 non-emergency appropriations. This year’s budget increase is on top of the unprecedented increase of \$17.7 billion provided over the last two years.

Advanced VA Healthcare Funding: Includes \$48.2 billion in advance appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for three medical accounts: medical services, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities. This is an 8 percent increase over FY 2010 and will provide reliable and timely funding to support the delivery of medical care.

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Medical Services:

Provides \$34.7 billion, 13 percent above 2009, to improve access to medical services for all veterans.

The Veterans Health Administration estimates they will treat more than 6.1 million patients in 2010, including more than 419,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan (56,000 more than 2009).

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- Mental Health: Provides \$4.6 billion, \$800 million above 2009, for mental health care – to meet the growing need with troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

- Rural Health: The Department estimates that \$440 million will be spent in fiscal year 2010 on innovative practices to improve access to care for veterans in rural areas.

More than 40 percent (3.2 million) of enrolled veterans live in rural areas.

- Medical Facilities: Provides \$1.1 billion to address the backlog in non-recurring maintenance at our medical facilities, in combination with the FY 2009 Supplemental;
- Veterans Centers: Invests in 28 new Vet Centers and 30 new Community Based Outpatient Centers to provide community-based readjustment counseling for veterans and their families.
- Medical and Prosthetic Research: Provides \$580 million for medical and prosthetic research related to veterans health, including a \$48 million increase for research to address the critical needs of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans.
- Priority 8 Veterans: Includes \$533 million to expand eligibility for VA health care to an estimated 266,000 non-service-disabled veterans earning more than \$30,000 a year, so-called Priority 8 veterans. The Obama Administration is aiming to enroll 500,000 new Priority 8 veterans in the VA health care system by 2013.
- Assistance for Homeless Vets: Provides \$3.2 billion, 40 percent above 2009, including \$26 million for a Presidential Initiative to combat homelessness, \$150 million for the homeless grants and per diem program, \$20 million for supportive services for low income veterans and families, in addition to \$21 million to hire additional personnel for the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program.
- Working to Reduce Veterans Claims Backlog: Adds roughly 1,200 additional claims

processors to continue to work down the backlog of benefits claims and to reduce the time to process new claims. Currently nearly 397,000 veterans' claims are pending.

- Information Technology: Provides \$3.3 billion, 30 percent above 2009, with new initiatives including paperless benefits processing and improvements in electronic health records.

- Inspector General: Includes \$107 million, 17 percent above 2009, to provide additional oversight personnel, including initiatives regarding financial audit and information technology program reviews.

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Military Construction: Provides \$24.6 billion, 8 percent below 2009, including \$1.4 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations. The decline in BRAC construction requirements and the success of the family housing privatization program reduce the need for increasing investments in military construction.

- Trainee Troop Housing: Provides \$450 million to accelerate the Army's program to modernize troop housing facilities for trainees. The Army needs \$2.2 billion to bring all 115,413 trainee barracks spaces up to standard and the program currently is not scheduled to finish until 2017.
- National Guard and Reserve Facilities: Includes \$200 million in additional funding for Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy and Marine Corps Reserve, and Air Force Reserve construction to address critical unfunded requirements, in recognition of the tremendous contributions made by Guard and Reserve personnel to emergency assistance, homeland security, and national defense.

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Military Family Housing:

Provides \$2 billion, same as the President's Request, to continue eliminating inadequate military family housing.

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Child Care Centers for Military Families:

To help military families, the bill invests in two new child development Centers to add child care space for more than 300 children.

This builds on the progress of the recent supplemental which provides for the construction of 25 new child development centers at military bases, which will provide care for an additional 5,000 kids.

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Overseas Contingency Operations:

Includes \$1.4 billion to support additional military construction requirements to support operations and troop increases in Afghanistan.

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BRAC 1990 Environmental Cleanup:

Provides \$537 million, \$78 million above 2009, to address the large unfunded backlog of environmental cleanup for bases that were closed during the four previous BRAC rounds.

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2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and Re-stationing:

Provides \$7.5 billion to implement base closures and realignments, and support the re-stationing of troops and their families from overseas to the United States.

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